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ABSTRACT

A program designed to improve the reading, writing, and thinking skills of low achieving poverty level high school juniors was developed for use in a Pennsylvania high school. The program uses the Pennsylvania Reading Comprehension Plan's four critical experiences of (1) responding to literature, (2) self-selected and sustained silent reading, (3) oral and written composition, and (4) investigating and mastering language patterns in each of its four units. Two of these units concentrate on the students, specifically on the role of school in their lives and on their career and work plans, and two deal with logic and deductive reasoning. Each unit has its own evaluative criteria involving pretest and posttest holistically scored writing samples. Student achievement is also measured by the California Achievement Test. A major component of the program is its use of professors from a near-by community college who visit the high school and conduct lessons within each unit. Students also visit the college for special lectures and classes. A 2-month period is allowed for each unit, and each unit involves extensive writing in the descriptive, narrative, evaluative, and expressive modes. (The paper contains outlines for each unit in the program.) (FL)

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COMMUNITY COLLEGE of Philadelphia

\+ A Humanities COMPONENT

\+ COLLABORATION

The 4 C's in Kensington High School

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

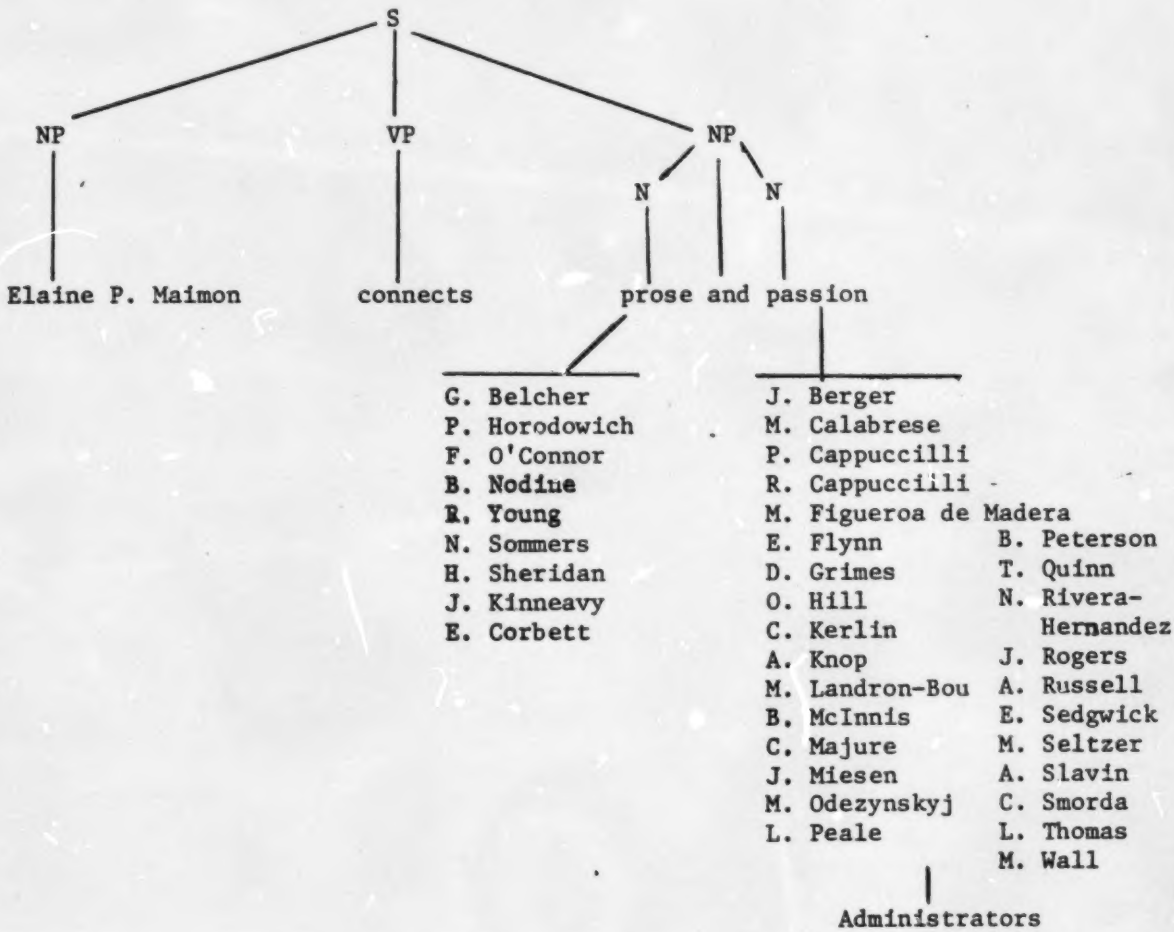
Deep Structure

"Only connect! That was the whole of her sermon. Only connect the prose and the passion, and both will be exalted, and human love will be seen at its highest."

E. M. Forster, Howards End

Surface Structure

Elaine P. Maimon connects prose and passion.



I am gratefully indebted to the National Endowment for the Humanities for giving Dr. Maimon the opportunity to connect with all of us and to let us share in and experience human love.

OVERVIEW

In Errors and Expectations, Mina Shaughnessy makes the point that Basic Writing students substitute, "common wisdom in the form of platitudes or routine affirmations for careful individual inquiry and drift from stated general purposes toward personal reverie."[1] As a department head of English and an adjunct college instructor, I can only confirm Shaughnessy's description of student writers.

In order to improve student writing at the secondary level, in particular in an eleventh-grade English class, I have developed a four-unit Humanities Component with major concentration on both writing and critical thinking. Current research indicates that writing will not only improve writing but will also improve reading.[2] In terms of critical thinking, empirically based research has not yet been conducted, but Monroe Beardsley summarizes our present state:

> Most of the information we must bring to bear upon problems comes to us in words .... And most of our thinking is done in words. Until we articulate an idea in a sentence, we cannot be sure what it is, we cannot connect it with other ideas that may affect its truth, and we cannot be confident that we see what is right and what is wrong with it. Critical thinking is impossible without skill in handling language.[3]

Thus, the combination of both writing and critical thinking.

DESCRIPTION OF THE POPULATION

The students selected for this Humanities Component are eleventh-grade, inner city, Black, Hispanic, and White Title I students who are members of a program entitled Mission Excellence. These poverty-level students, who scored below the 26th percentile in the vocabulary portion of the California Achievement Test, were invited to be Mission Excellence participants because of their good attendance. Within this project, they use Mastery Learning

principles in their Reading class, are eligible for extensive tutoring, and share a block roster within English, Mathematics, Biology, and Reading. Although these students are below the reading norms for eleventh grade, many will puruse higher education. Of the 14% of the graduating class last year who attended college, 50% attended Community College of Philadelphia. Most of these students fit Shaughnessy's description of the Basic Writing student.

GENERAL OBJECTIVES

Using the Pennsylvania Reading Comprehensive Plan's Four Critical Experiences of Responding to Literature, Self-Selected and Sustained Silent Reading, Oral and Written Composition, and Investigating and Mastering Language Patterns,[4] I have developed a four-unit Humanities Component. Two of these Humanities units center on the Student and two on Learning Logic and Applying Deductive Reasoning. This four-unit sequence is:

Unit One - Students' School[5]
An examination of students' present school as well as their elementary, middle or junior high schools.

Unit Two - Fundamentals of Logic
"And," "or," Negation, and Forms of Implication

Unit Three- Applying Deductive Reasoning
Truth versus Validity, Mathematics Verbal Problems, Mysteries[6]

Unit Four - Students' Future
Career, Post-secondary School, and Computer in their Personal, Consumer, and Work lives.

EVALUATION

Although each unit has its own evaluative criteria, pre- and posttest holistically scored writing samples will be evaluated.[7] Growth will also be measured by the reading comprehension subtest of the California Achievement Test.

COLLABORATION

In all four units, the Community College of Philadelphia English and Philosophy professors will be involved. Primarily, both professors will visit Kensington High School and conduct lessons within the four units. In Unit One, for instance, the English professor will conduct a School Attitude Survey with students. The Philosophy professor, in Unit Two, will teach our students the fundamentals of Logic. This eleventh-grade English class will also become active participants in the Logic classes held at Community College. This collaboration will provide the professors and the English department head with an opportunity to work together. It will also give the students additional professional assistance and an opportunity to visit a local college campus, observe classes, and meet students very much like themselves.

TIMELINE

One Unit, or theme, will be introduced every other month. Unit One - Students' School will begin in October; Unit Two - Logic, December; Unit Three - Problem Solving, February; Unit Four - Students' Future, April. This does not mean that each unit will take two months to complete, but it does suggest that sufficient time within the English Curriculum framework will be available to complete assignments and visit schools.

RATIONALE FOR WRITING SEQUENCE

In reviewing Units One and Four, the reader will note that the Writing Modes concentrate on the Descriptive, Narrative, and Evaluative with Expressive and Referential Aims.[8] This sequence, centered primarily on Description, is supported by Britton who states, "the expectations and resources of expressive talk, is like to be both the most accessible mode for younger writers and the

key to developing confidence and range in using written language."[9] This gradual transition from Descriptive to Narrative, coupled with Moffett's I, interior monologue, to You, public, Order[10] will move the students from an intimate to a more public audience. And, as Britton found, there is an immediate necessity for such an approach for in his study only 5.5% of writing time was devoted to the Descriptive Mode/Expressive Aim.[11]

Activities or engagements for each assignment have been excerpted from Bruffee,[12] Maimon,[13] Belcher,[14] Horodowich,[15] and O'Connor.[16]

UNIT OUTLINES

For each of the four units, an OVERVIEW, OBJECTIVES, and EVALUATION are stated.

Units One and Four are further subdivided by

TOPIC	ORDER
DOMINANT MODE	STRATEGY
AIM	MATERIALS/SELECTIONS.

Units Two and Three are subdivided by

TOPIC

STRATEGY

MATERIALS/SELECTIONS.

UNIT ONE - SCHOOL

OVERVIEW: To examine the role of school--elementary, middle/junior, and senior high--in students' lives.

OBJECTIVES: The student will:
1. Examine the role of school in their earlier and present lives.
2. Upon completion of Objective 1, write a Description of one of their elementary or middle/junior high schools.
3. Become aware of the components of their own learning process.
4. Respond through journal entries to selected short stories.

TOPIC	DOMINANT MODE	AIM	ORDER	STRATEGY	MATERIALS/SELECTIONS
School Attitude	Description	Expressive	Interior Monologue	Questionnaire conducted by CCP English professor	School Attitude Survey
Description of School	Description	Expressive	Conversation	Collaborative Learning directed by CCP English professor	Observation Form
Meta-educational Awareness	Narration	Expressive	Conversation	Collaborative Learning	Students' responses
Short Story		Literature		Individual and group reading	Nathaniel Benchley "Father's Day" Ray Bradbury "All Summer in a Day" Shirley Jackson "Charles" Alice Munro "Day of the Butterfly" Jesse Stuart "The Split Cherry Tree"
Prose		Literature		Group reading	Alfred Kazin "From the Subway to the Synagogue"

EVALUATION: The students will:

1. Respond to the short stories in their journals.
2. Write a narrative based on their prose selection.

TOPIC	DOMINANT MODE	AIM	ORDER	STRATEGY	MATERIALS/SELECTIONS
Short Story	Evaluation	Expressive	Interior Monologue	Responses recorded in Journals	Short stories
Prose	Narration	Expressive	Conservation	Paired Interviews	Response to either statement: "All my early life is recalled when I pass the building. The sight of the school fills me with _____." "All my early life is recalled when I pass my grade school. I can still recall _____."

Adapted from Baum, Sandra. "School Days." Thematic Units in Teaching English and the Humanities. Second Supplement. Edited by Sylvia Spann and Mary Beth Culp. Urbana, Illinois: NCTE, 1980.

UNIT TWO - LOGIC

OVERVIEW: To learn the fundamentals of Logic.

OBJECTIVES: The students will learn the functions of:
1. "and" statements
2. "or" statements
3. Negation
4. Forms of Implication

TOPIC	STRATEGY	MATERIALS/SELECTIONS
"and" statements		Logic in Easy Steps, Book 1
	The CCP Philosophy professor will teach the KHS class.	
"or" statements		Logic in Easy Steps, Book 2
Negation		Logic in Easy Steps, Books 3 and 4
	The KHS will visit the Logic class at CCP.	
Forms of Implication		Logic in Easy Steps, Books 5

EVALUATION: The students will be able to determine the truth value of statements containing:
1. "and"
2. "or"
3. Negation
4. Forms of Implication

TOPIC	STRATEGY	MATERIALS/SELECTIONS
"and" "or" Negation Forms of Implication	Students will demonstrate their competence by responding to problems which appear on a computer's visual display.	TRS 80

Harnadek, Anita. Logic in Easy Steps. Pacific Grove, Calif.: Midwest Publications Co., Inc., 1982.

UNIT THREE - DEDUCTIVE REASONING

OVERVIEW: To learn how to apply Deductive Reasoning

OBJECTIVES: The students will:
1. Be able to distinguish between Truth versus Validity
2. Apply Deductive Reasoning to
   a. Mathematics Verbal Problems
   b. Mysteries

TOPIC	STRATEGY	MATERIALS/SELECTIONS
Truth versus Validity	KHS class will visit CCP's Logic class.	Critical Reasoning
	CCP Philosophy will teach KHS class.	Logic in Easy Steps, Books 8-10
Apply Deductive Reasoning to a. Mathematics Verbal Problems	Collaborative Learning	Excerpts from General Mathematics textbooks
b. Mysteries	CCP English professor will introduce and teach the mystery as genre and as a form for deductive reasoning	Minute Mysteries

EVALUATION: The students will be able to:
1. Determine whether a statement is true and an argument is valid
2. Solve mathematics verbal problems with greater accuracy
3. Write their own mystery.

TOPIC	STRATEGY	MATERIALS/SELECTIONS
Truth versus Validity	Tested items will appear on a computer's visual display.	TRS*80
Mathematics Verbal Problems	Test improvement within their mathematics class	Teacher-developed tests
Mystery	Write their own mysteries	Student-created Minute Mysteries

Cederblom, Jerry and David W. Paulsen. Critical Reasoning, Understanding and Criticizing Arguments and Theories. Belmont, Calif.: Wadsworth Publishing Co., 1982.

UNIT FOUR - FUTURE

OVERVIEW: Having completed an extensive self-examination, studied Logic and Deductive Reasoning, and have been instructed by both an English and Philosophy professor both in their home school and at Community College of Philadelphia, these students will now look toward their future.

OBJECTIVES: The students will:
1. Research a Career
2. Describe a Post-secondary School

TOPIC	DOMINANT MODE	AIM	ORDER	STRATEGY	MATERIALS/SELECTIONS
Career	Description	Reference	Public	Library research at KHS and CCP	Student selected
Post-secondary School	Description	Exposition	Public	Independent/ Individual School Visit	Student-developed Observation Form

EVALUATION: The students will project what the Computer's effect will be in their personal, consumer, and work lives.

Computer Personal Consumer Work	Evaluation	Explain and Prove	Inference	Treeing a Topic	Student selected

FOOTNOTES

[1]Mina Shaughnessy, Errors and Expectations, A Guide for the Teacher of Basic Writing (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), pp. 230-231.

[2]Although not all explicitly addressed to the college student, the following research suggests that writing will improve reading:

Carol Chomsky, "Write First, Read Later," Childhood Education, 47 (March, 1971), 296-299.

Marie M. Clay, "Research Update: Learning and Teaching Writing: A Developmental Perspective," Language Arts, 59, No. 1 (January, 1982), 65-70.

Barbara D. Day and Jan S. O. Swetenburg, "Where Children 'Write to Read,'" Childhood Education, 54 (March, 1978), 229-233.

Suzanne L. Holt and JoAnne L. Vacca. "Reading with a Sense of Writer: Writing with a Sense of Reader," Language Arts, 58, No. 8 (November/December, 1981), 937-941.

Anthony R. Petrosky, "From Story to Essay: Reading and Writing." College Composition and Communication, XXXIII, No. 1 (February, 1982), 19-36.

Frant Smith, "Research Update--Demonstration, Engagement, and Sensitivity: A Revised Approach to Language Learning." Language Arts, 58, No. 1 (January, 1982), 103-112.

[3]Monroe C. Beardsley, Thinking Straight, Principles of Reasoning for Readers and Writers (4th ed.; Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, Inc, 1975), p. 5.

[4]Morton Botel, A Comprehensive Reading Communication Arts Plan (Harrisburg, PA: PA Department of Education, Division of Communications).

[5]Adapted from Sandra Baum, "School Days" in Thematic Units in Teaching English and the Humanities, ed. by Sylvia Spann and Mary Beth Culp (Second Supplement; Urbana: NCTE, 1980), pp. 3-20.

[6]Adapted from Lois Easton, "Sleuth+Proof+Truth: A Formula for Mystery" in Thematic Units in Teaching English and the Humanities, ed by Sylvia Spann and Mary Beth Culp (Third Supplement; Urbana: NCTE, 1981), pp. 47-69.

[7]Lee Odell, "Defining and Assessing Competence in Writing" in The Nature and Measurement of Competency in English, ed. by Charles R. Cooper (Urbana: NCTE, 1981), pp. 117-134.

[8]James L. Kinneavy, A Theory of Discourse, The Aims of Discourse (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1971).

[9]James Britton et al., The Development of Writing Abilities (11-18) (London: Macmillan Education Ltd., 1975), p. 142.

[10]James Moffett, Teaching the Universe of Discourse (Boston; Houghton Mifflin Company, 1968).

[11]Britton, p. 163.

[12]Kenneth A. Bruffee, A Short Course in Writing (2nd ed.; Cambridge: Winthrop Publishers, Inc., 1980).

[13]Elaine P. Maimon et al., Writing in the Arts and Sciences (Cambridge: Winthrop Publishers, Inc., 1981.

[14]Gerald P. Belcher, Through classroom demonstration, discussion, and handouts.

[15]Peggy Maki Horodowich, Through classroom demonstration, discussion, and handouts.

[16]Finbarr O'Connor, Through classroom demonstration, discussion, and handouts.

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